

Bianca, Pam

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Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2014 10:25 AM
To: LABTestimony
Subject: HB 5279

Testimony of Charlyne Olko to the Labor & Public Employee Committee,

February 27, 2014

Members of the committee, I am a resident of Enfield, business owner and parent. I am not certain why you would consider a minimum fair wage exception for individuals with impaired capacity. I am curious as to how the committee would define impaired capacity. My first thought is that you would most likely be referring to employees with intellectual disabilities because I am a parent of a young man with Down syndrome. Then again, you may be referring to employees with drug and alcohol dependancies, maybe mental health issues, wounded veterans with neurological impairments and accident victims. The list is long. All these people may fit the description of impaired capacity.

All people should have equal rights in the workplace to include being paid a fair wage, at the very least, minimum wage. No employee should be made to feel less than a person. We all have value and deserve the right to a fair wage.

I have a good understanding of the difficulty, for those with intellectual disabilities, getting hired in competitive employment. Employers that do hire are pleasantly surprised that they are good employees. They are reliable, honest and hardworking. There is no concern that they will have to leave early, continually checking their cell phone, texting, coming to work with a strange hair color or style, dressed inappropriately, body piercings, tattoos or a nonproductive day after a night of partying. They are committed employees. To single out a separate population is clearly discriminatory.

A double standard already prevails in this state. I encountered great difficulty during my son's k-12 school years. The school district didn't feel he was worthy of an education. It took extreme effort to get him reading services. I never had to ask the school district to teach my other children to read and do math. My son left the state to further his education. He was not welcome at any CT college or university. And now employers will be allowed to pay him reduced wages!

I urge the committee not to pass this act!!!